suspended two of its officials and the branch officials who were connected with the gold bullion business had been shifted out of the branch. The bank has also reported that the case has been referred to the Central Bureau of Investigation, who have started their investigations.

Circulation of Fake Currency Notes

†1748. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that fake currency notes are still in circulation in the country;

(b) if so, whether Government are considering to take any concrete steps to check it; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Union Government has taken a number of steps to curb the circulation of fake currency notes which, *inter-alia*, include setting up a special unit in the Central Bureau of Investigation for exclusive investigation of counterfeit currency notes, scaling up vigilance by the Border Security Force/ Custom Authorities to prevent smuggling of such currency notes into the country; incorporation of special security features in higher denomination notes and dissemination of information on security features through print media and Doordarshan for benefit of public. Further, a High Level Technical Committee of Experts with representatives from Ministry of Home Affairs, National Security Council Sectt., Reserve Bank of India and the Printing Presses has been constituted for examining the whole gamut of problem caused by circulation of fake currency notes.

Establishing National Rural Bank of India

†1749. SHRI KRIPAL PARMAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that most of rural banks of the country are performing well and the association of the employees of rural banks *i.e.*, All India Rural

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Bank Workers Organization has been demanding to establish National Rural Bank of India after merging all those Banks;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that a Minister of Himachal Pradesh has sent such a request in the month of Feburary this year; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) Yes, Sir. The financial results for the year 2000-2001 indicate that the RRBs are performing well. As reported by National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD) of the 196 RRBs, 171 RRBs have earned a profit of Rs. 712.34 crores during the year. Of these, 79 RRBs have attained sustainable viability and have built up reserves of Rs. 1232.88 crores while 92 RRBs have attained current viability although they carry accumulated losses.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Question does not arise in view of (b) above.

Age bar on VRS in SBI

1750. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that State Bank of India stipulated an age bar while granting voluntary retirement unlike all other banks and refused to give Voluntary Retirement Scheme to about 11,000 officers for which there are court cases in all the States;

(b) if so, whether State Bank of India had the permission of Government to stipulate the age bar as also to incur huge expenditure of public money wastefully; and

(c) if not, what action Government propose to take against the State Bank of India in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) The Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) was designed with the in-built condition of rightsizing the manpower without affecting the functioning of the banks adversely. Banks were also advised that there is a cost attached to VRS and unnecessarily granting VRS to employees